

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BEIRUT 07554 210744Z

14

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 OMB-01 SAM-01 ACDA-07

IO-13 SSM-03 /088 W

----- 113675

O R 201612Z SEP 76

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1829

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY ATHENS

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY NICOSIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 7554

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, LE, SY

SUBJECT: THE FAILURE OF THE CHTAURA MEETINGS

1. SUMMARY: TWO QUADRIpartite MEETINGS AT CHTAURA HAVE FAILED. NEXT MEETING SCHEDULED FOR SEPT. 24, DAY AFTER SARKIS' EXPECTED INAUGURATION. PALESTINIANS MAY BE UNWILLING TO COMPROMISE UNTIL ASSURED THAT SARKIS HAS IN FACT BECOME PRESIDENT, OR THEY MAY BE FUNDAMENTALLY UNWILLING MAKE UNILATERAL CONCESSIONS DEMANDED BY SYRIANS. IF NEITHER SIDE IS WILLING TO COMPROMISE, LIKELIHOOD THAT FIGHTING WILL ESCALATE IS MEASURABLY INCREASED. END SUMMARY.

2. SECOND CHTAURA MEETING SEPT. 19 OF LEBANESE PRESIDENT-ELECT ELIAS SARKIS, PLO CHAIRMAN YASSER ARAFAT, SYRIAN VICE-MINISTER OF DEFENSE GENERAL NAJI
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BEIRUT 07554 210744Z

JAMIL, AND ARAB LEAGUE DEPUTY SECRETARY-GENERAL

HASSAN SABRI AL-KHOLI WAS, BY ALL ACCOUNTS, DISTINCT FAILURE. THE KEY ISSUE WAS AGAIN THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE PALESTINIANS/LEFTISTS FROM THEIR MOUNTAIN STRONGHOLDS IN THE HIGH METN. THE PALESTINIANS REPORTEDLY SAID THEY ARE READY TO WITHDRAW FROM THESE POSITIONS, BUT ONLY AS PART OF A COMPREHENSIVE AGREEMENT. AL-MUHARRIR SEPT. 19 PUT IT AS FOLLOWS: "THE RESISTANCE IS READY TO WITHDRAW FROM THE MOUNTAINS IN EXCHANGE FOR STRATEGIC WITHDRAWAL BY THE OTHER SIDES IN SUCH A MANNER THAT THE MILITARY BALANCE WILL BE MAINTAINED." THE SYRIANS, APPARENTLY SUPPORTED BY SARKIS, CONTINUED TO INSIST THAT PALESTINIAN/LEFTIST WITHDRAWAL MUST PRECEDE ANY DISCUSSION OF AN OVERALL CEASE-FIRE OR A SYRIAN PULLBACK. ON THE CAIRO ACCORDS, ARAFAT REPORTEDLY STATED THAT THE PLO IS READY TO FACILITATE SARKIS'S MISSION BY IMPLEMENTING THIS AGREEMENT, BUT WENT ON TO CALL FOR THE RETURN OF REFUGEES TO TEEL ZAATAR, NABAA AND THE KOURA. THE MEETING BROKE UP AFTER TWO HOURS OF FRUITLESS DISCUSSION, WITH THE PARTICIPANTS AGREEING TO MEET AGAIN ON SEPT. 24, THE DAY AFTER SARKIS IS SCHEDULED TO BE SWORN IN AS PRESIDENT.

3. THE FAILURE OF THE CHTAURA MEETING HAS CAST A PALL OF GLOOM OVER ALL BUT THE MOST OPTIMISTIC. GENERAL JAMIL COMMENTED, "WE DID NOT ACHIEVE A COMMON VIEWPOINT," AND ADDED OMINOUSLY, "MEETINGS ARE NO LONGER NECESSARY." PRESIDENT-ELECT SARKIS DECLINED COMMENT, AS IS HIS WONT, AND ARAFAT WAS ALSO SILENT. EVEN THE ETERNAL OPTIMIST (IN PUBLIC), AL REP AL-KHOLI, COULD ONLY SAY THAT MEETINGS WILL CONTINUE, BECAUSE OF THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SUBJECT.

4. COLLAPSE OF CHTAURA TALKS ALSO INCREASES THE TENSION SURROUNDING THE INAUGURATION OF PRESIDENT SARKIS. BOTH SIDES ARE ACCUSING THE OTHER OF WANTING TO FRUSTRATE THIS EVENT. ALTHOUGH THE PLACE OF THE PARLIAMENTARY SESSION HAS NOT YET BEEN PUBLICLY ANNOUNCED, LATEST EXPECTATION IS THAT IT WILL BE HELD AT THE NATIONAL MUSEUM IN BEIRUT, WITHIN RANGE
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BEIRUT 07554 210744Z

OF CHAMOUN'S "TIGER" MILITIA. CHAMOUN HAS ALREADY DECLARED THAT THIS SESSION MUST TAKE PLACE FOR SARKIS TO ASSUME OFFICE LEGALLY; HE MAY WELL USE HIS POWER TO EXTRACT CONCESSIONS FROM SYRIA AND/OR SARKIS IN EXCHANGE FOR NOT DISRUPTING THE CEREMONY.

5. SYRIA CONTINUES TO HOLD THE POSITION THAT ITS MILITARY PRESENCE IS NOT NEGOTIABLE BECAUSE

IT IS NOT PART OF THE PROBLEM BUT OF THE SOLUTION.
GEN. JAMIL'S REMARK THAT FURTHER MEETINGS UNNECESSARY
SUGGESTS THAT SYRIA MAY BE RECONSIDERING THE MILITARY
OPTION, BUT WE DOUBT SYRIA WILL MAKE ANY DRAMATIC
MOVE BEFORE SARKIS'S INAUGURATION, WHICH THEY HAVE
CONSISTENTLY SUPPORTED. IF SARKIS TAKES OFFICE WITHOUT
INCIDENT, HE WILL GO INTO SEPT. 24 MEETING WITH THE FULL
AUTHORITY OF HIS NEW OFFICE, AND MAY BE IN BETTER
POSITION TO CONTROL EXTREMIST CHRISTIAN ELEMENTS AND
TO ARRANGE COMPROMISE BETWEEN PLO AND SYRIA. UNDER
THESE CONDITIONS, SYRIA MIGHT SEND A HIGHEER-LEVEL
REPRESENTATIVE, PREPARED TO MAKE A UNILATERAL
GESTURE OF SUPPORT FOR THE NEW PRESIDENT. THERE ARE
ALSO RUMORS THAT HIS PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS WILL OFFER
"NEW DEAL" TO ALL LEBANESE AND MAY HELP PROMOTE A
LEBANESE-LEBANESE DIALOGUE. POT CONTINUES TO BOIL,
BUT WHAT KIND OF STEW WILL EMERGE IS UNCLEAR.
LANE

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, CHTAURA, PEACE TALKS, CIVIL DISORDERS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 20 SEP 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976BEIRUT07554
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760356-0038
From: BEIRUT
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760943/aaaabkho.tel
Line Count: 133
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 21 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <21 APR 2004 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <22 APR 2004 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: THE FAILURE OF THE CHTAURA MEETINGS
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, LE, SY, (SARKIS, ELIAS), (ARAFAT, YASSER), (JAMIL, NAJI), (KHOLI, HASSAN SABRI AL)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006